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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Ochiai, E. (2011). Unsustainable societies: the failure of familialism in East Asia's compressed modernity. *Historical Social Research*, 36(2), 219-245. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.36.2011.2.219-245>

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Unsustainable Societies: The Failure of Familialism in East Asia's Compressed Modernity

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Abstract: »Gesellschaften ohne Nachhaltigkeit: Das Versagen des Familialismus in der komprimierten Moderne Ostasiens«. Fertility in some East Asian societies has declined to a new global low level, which can be called "ultra-low fertility." The first question of this article is whether East Asia is going through a second demographic transition just like Europe. The second question is whether individualism is the cause of the change. The answer to the first question is both yes and no, because the demographic changes currently underway in East Asia have similarities to those in Europe and North America, but there are considerable differences in essence. Unlike Europe, where cohabitation is replacing marriage, marriage as an institution of duty and responsibility rather than intimacy is still intact in East Asia. Because of that, risk-averse individualization occurred to avoid the burden of a family. It is not individualism but familialism that is causing the current demographic and family changes in East Asia. Different degrees of compression of modernity created the varieties of familialism: familialist reform in Japan and "liberal familialism" in other societies. We may conclude that both types of familialism have failed in constructing a sustainable social system.

Keywords: lowest-low fertility, East Asia, compressed modernity, familialism, second demographic transition.

In today's world, East Asia is the region most associated with very low fertility. The latest total fertility rates (TFR) for Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore and Japan are 1.03 (2009), 1.06 (2008), 1.19 (2008), 1.28 (2008), 1.37 (2008) respectively. In the 1990s, Southern and German-speaking European countries recorded fertility levels below 1.3, which was described as the "lowest-low fertility" (Kohler et al. 2002), but contemporary Asia has broken through that level. In the second demographic transition theory, lowered fertility is hypothesized as being caused by individualism (Lesthaeghe 1991; van de Kaa 1987). The first question of this article is whether we can consider that East Asia is going through a second demographic transition, just like Europe. The second question is whether individualism is also the cause for the low fertility in East Asia.

In order to answer these questions, this paper uses two strategies. The first is to embed fertility in the wider social context. By focusing on changes in mar-

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riage we can clearly see the differences between East Asia and Europe. The other strategy is the comparison method, not only between regions, i.e., between East Asia and Europe, but also within regions. The key concept of this paper is “compressed modernity” (Chang 1999), referring to the way modernization has happened in such a brief period. This article will show how the increased complexity of the modernization process due to chronological compression in East Asian modernity has led each society to respond that with its own policy directions, which have had crucial effects on materially constructing the current situation in East Asia.

1. Ultra-low and Lowest-low Fertility in East Asia

1.1 Diversity Within East Asia

First, let us take a demographic view at the current state of East Asian societies. The geographical tag “East Asia” has, in recent years, been used in two ways. The first is the traditional way of referring to the countries of China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, in a more restricted sense of the term. The second is a more encompassing use that takes in both East Asia in the narrow sense and also Southeast Asia. In the context of proposing the establishment of an East Asian community, the wider sense is the one most often used, although this region, unlike Europe where the EU has been created, has never historically been a politically or culturally unified whole. Language, religion, kinship organizations, and many other aspects demonstrate that East Asia, in the wider sense, is an extremely diverse region.

The diversity of East Asia is also shown in its current fertility levels. We see a range in the TFR from almost 1.0 to greater than 4.0. When we look at East Asia in terms of fertility, we can divide it into four blocks (Table 1). The first group contains Japan, the earliest country in this region to undergo rapid economic growth in the 1960s, and the “four tigers” (Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, known as NIES) which underwent economic growth in the 1980s as the so-called “Asian Miracle,” which make up the lowest-low fertility societies. The second group consists of Thailand and China which have fertility levels between 1.5 and 2.0. The third group is the bulk of Southeast Asian nations, as well as Mongolia and North Korea, which are maintaining relatively high fertility rates of between 2.0 and 3.0. The fourth group is the countries of Laos and Cambodia, which have not yet completed their first fertility transition.

When examined from a global perspective, we can split Group 1 up further into two sub-groups. The first includes Singapore and Japan, nations with approximately the same lowest-low fertility as post-communist CEE countries, Southern Europe and German-speaking countries. The other consists of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea, which have levels lower than anywhere else in the

world. This second sub-group can be termed “ultra-low fertility” societies (Straughan et al. 2008). This article mainly deals with the ultra-low and lowest-low fertility societies, but it will discuss other East Asian societies as needed.

1.2 The Historical Development of Low Fertility

We shall now take a closer look at the five ultra-low and lowest-low fertility societies in East Asia. Figure 1 shows the TFRs from 1970 in these societies and demonstrates that all of them except Japan had TFRs above 3.0 in 1970. Governments started family planning programs as a national policy immediately following WW2 in Japan and Singapore (Suga 2010, 140), and in the 1960s in Korea and Taiwan (Yamaji 2010, 43), spurring the fertility transition. Replacement level fertility was reached in Japan in 1956, in Singapore in 1975, and in Korea and Taiwan in 1984 (Suzuki 2010, 20). Hong Kong reached replacement level in 1980.

After reaching replacement level, Japan’s fertility remained steady for about twenty years, and then in 1974 started dropping below replacement level. In other words, it immediately followed the second fertility decline that began in Europe around 1970. In contrast to this, there was no period in the other four societies where fertility remained steady around the replacement level. When we compare fertility declines in Europe and East Asia, this is the key difference to note. In Singapore, birth control policies were followed even after replacement level was reached, and in the 1970s a new system of fertility control was even brought in, whereby anyone who wished was able to have an abortion or undergo sterilization (Suga 2010, 141). Korea and Taiwan were also slow in making policy changes, and by the 1980s fertility levels in the four societies temporarily dropped below that of Japan.

By the 1990s, while Japan’s fertility continued to drop, that of Singapore, Korea, and Taiwan steadied temporarily, holding at between 1.6 and 1.8. In Singapore, the quality of the populace started to be of governmental concern from 1984, with well-educated women from the upper income brackets being encouraged to give birth, and conversely with poorly-educated women from lower income brackets being encouraged to undergo sterilization. In 1986, existing population control policies started to be revised, and Singapore’s Family Planning and Population Board was closed down. In 1987, the old “Two-child families for Singapore” slogan was replaced with “Have three or more if you can afford it” (Suga 2010, 142). In stark contrast to Japan, where there was an allergy to the pronatalist ideas of the “Give Birth and Procreate” policy of WW2, Singapore changed quite quickly to a birth promotion policy. On the other hand, during this time Korea and Taiwan had few fears regarding the decline of fertility, and “South Korean demographers used to interpret Japan’s very low fertility as a social symptom of advanced industrial capitalism that was shared by most Western countries” (Chang 2010, 35).

A new aspect started after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-98, and became clearer once the 21st century started. The TFRs for Taiwan, Singapore, and Korea dropped sharply, and while they recovered briefly in 2000, started plummeting again in 2001. In that year, Korea fell below the 1.3 level, and in 2003 Japan, Korea, and Singapore followed suit.¹ Following that, fertility in Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore dropped below Japan, and while Japan and Singapore showed either a slight improvement or held steady, Korea and Taiwan continued dropping along with Hong Kong, going below 1.1 and recording a new global low level of fertility. The lowest levels each society reached were 1.05 in Korea in 2008, 1.03 in Taiwan in 2009, 0.98 in Hong Kong in 2007. This group, termed “ultra-low fertility societies,” started showing its unique trends from this period. Explanations for this trend are only just beginning. Suzuki Toru, for example, has contrasted the strong Confucian family traditions of Korea and Taiwan and other nations with the feudal family traditions of Southern Europe and Japan, trying to find a causal factor in traditional family structures (Suzuki 2010). I propose that we should pay more attention to the economic aspects, because the economic crisis in 1997-98 seems to have played a critical role in altering the trends.

1.3 Compressed Modernity and Demographic Transitions

Earlier, I noted how we need to focus on the fact that, in the process of declining fertility, Asian societies outside Japan never had a period where fertility stayed at the replacement level, an argument I would like to develop further now. When we take another look at long-term trends in declining fertility in different regions of the globe from a macro perspective, we can gain a theoretical idea for considering social change in East Asia.

Figure 2 shows the long-term trends in TFR for a number of East Asian countries, including Japan, as well as those of Europe and the U.S. The first thing we should notice, at least in Europe, is that there were two declines, one as part of the first demographic transition and the other as part of the second.

An interesting fact is that, with very few exceptions, societies within one region – i.e. Europe or Asia – experienced their fertility declines almost simultaneously. In those two regions – with the exceptions of France in Europe and Japan in Asia – there is a gap of about half a century in the timings of first fertility declines. The first fertility decline occurred in most European societies between the 1870-80s and 1920-30s, and in most East Asian societies in the 1970s-80s. Japan experienced it in the 1950s, exactly halfway between the time of most European countries and that of most East Asian countries. In terms of

¹ Hong Kong has been at a level below 1.3 since the 1990s, but since it was handed over to China in 1997, the political situation at the time means that it will not be discussed in an equal sense.

timing, Japan does not fall into either the European group or the Asian group. For the same given period, it shares no social situation or policy issues with the societies of either region. I believe that this is connected with the difficulties of political decision-making and diplomatic isolation that Japanese society constantly experienced.

Next, when did the second fertility decline take place? In Europe and the U.S., it started at the end of the 1960s, and from the mid-1970s in Japan. Thus while there was a quarter-century gap between Japan and most countries in Europe for the first fertility decline, for the second fertility decline, the gap was only several years. Latecomers thus had their modernity not only delayed but “compressed,” as the Korean sociologist Chang Kyung-Sup² has noted (Chang 1999).

When, then, did the second fertility decline take place in Asian countries other than Japan? Examining Figure 2 with this question in mind can lead to confusion. In Asian countries, the fertility decline is continuing; we cannot see any boundary between the first and second fertility declines as we could for Europe, the U.S., or Japan. We need to operationally define a decline below replacement levels as a second fertility decline, which means that in Singapore the second fertility decline started in the mid-1970s, only a few years after Japan. Meanwhile, the second declines in South Korea, Thailand, and China started, respectively at the beginning of the 1980s, in the second half of the 1980s, and in the 1990s.

If we think of the period between these two fertility declines – when fertility was stable and at around the replacement level – as the “golden age” of modernity, then the length of this period was about 50 years in Europe and America, 20 years in Japan, and almost nonexistent in the rest of East Asia. As the Asian societies other than Japan have not experienced a stable modernity, they have plunged headlong and directly into late or second modernity³.

From the demographic point of view, we can see very clearly the compression of modernity that Chang Kyung-Sup pointed out. Areas in Asia outside Japan have gone through this “compressed modernity,” while Japan having a “semi-compressed modernity,” and this provides an explanation for the experiences these regions would later undergo. Chang Kyung-Sup defined this concept as “Compressed modernity is a social situation in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner

² East Asian names are given in the East Asian order of surname first.

³ The term “second modernity” was coined by Ulrich Beck to explain the fact that a modern society with distinctly different attributes to the previous modern society had arisen in Europe in the 1970s. The previous, classical modernity he termed “first modernity.” Beck did not define these two modernities in relation to the two demographic transitions, but I believe they should be, so at times I shall refer to the society created by the first demographic transition as the “first modernity” and the society created by the second demographic transition as the “second modernity” (Ochiai 2010a).

with respect to both time and space, and in which the dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements leads to the construction and reconstruction of a highly complex and fluid social system” (Chang 2010, 24).

2. Paradox of Marriage in East Asia

2.1 Divorce, Late Marriage, Celibacy

In the second demographic transition in Europe, it was not just fertility, but marriage-related indicators that showed major changes. These indicators included an increase in divorce rates, a decrease in marriage rates, an increase in age at first marriage, an increase in the proportion never married, an increase in cohabitation rate, and an increase in births out of wedlock. In East Asia, which has plummeted to extreme levels of fertility never seen historically, changes related to marriage superficially appear to resemble Europe, but differ in essence.

Divorce rates in East Asia are also increasing notably (Figure 3). After the late 1960s, when the divorce rate in Europe started rising, an increasing trend was also seen in Japan, which by the 1980s spiked at a crude divorce rate of 1.50, and in 2002 recorded an all-time high of 2.30. This is the same level as European countries like the UK, Germany, Sweden, and France shown in Table 3. In Taiwan and Korea, divorce rates started rising from the 1980s. By the start of the 1990s they were closing in on Japan, passing it during the Asian Financial Crisis, with Korea’s 2003 record level of 3.50 almost the same as the U.S.’s 3.60.

However, in a comparison of East Asian and European divorces, we must not overlook the fact that unlike Europe, where marriage has become an option in life and so the marriage rate itself is decreasing, in East Asia the marriage rate is not that much lower. So when we look at the ratio of marriage and divorce (Table 3), North and South American and European nations dominate, with East Asia’s highest figures remaining at 0.45 for Taiwan, 0.39 for Hong Kong and 0.36 for Korea. At the lower end of the spectrum we can see Vietnam and Mongolia, which are lower than Italy or Iran. Marriage in East Asia is changing, but at the moment marriage is still relatively common, and once a couple is married, they are less likely to divorce than in Northwest Europe or North and South America.

The increases in age at first marriage and in proportion never married are also clear in East Asia. Figure 4 shows the changes in age at first marriage in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Japan was the first to show an increase, but Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea show steep curves, and for men, outpaced Japan in the 1990s, while for women, showed almost no difference by the 2000s. The age at first marriage in these societies at the 2005-06

point was 30-31 for men and about 27-28 for women, close to Western European levels.

The proportion never married cannot be calculated until the relevant cohorts are 50 years old, so Figure 5 only shows Japan, which was the first to show changes. Once the rise in the 1970s in women who never married (due to eligible men having died during the war) ended, the proportions of both men and women who never married at all increased, leading to a society in which one in six men and one in thirteen women would never experience marriage in their lifetime. These numbers are lower than Sweden for both sexes, but are higher than other European societies. When we look at the proportions of women aged 35-39 who are unmarried in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Taiwan for comparison, the levels are 19%, 16%, 15% and 8% respectively, showing that there is a considerable gap from the “early marriage and universal marriage that marked the marriage patterns of mid-20th century Asia” (Suzuki 2010, 21).

2.2 Cohabitation and Births Out of Wedlock

There is another point we need to focus on here. In Europe, these phenomena – the increase in age at marriage and proportion never married – occur as a set with the increase in cohabitation and births out of wedlock. In other words, even if Europeans may marry later, they still have sexual liaisons and cohabit, causing a “transformation of intimacy” (Giddens 1992).

In contrast to this, in Asia there is no such clear increase in either cohabitation or births out of wedlock, and this aspect has been termed the greatest difference from the European second demographic transition. According to a survey of unmarried people in Japan, the ratio of those aged between 18 to 50 who responded that “there is no one of the opposite sex I am involved with” was 52.2% for men and 44.7% for women, and there is even a slight increase trend since the 1990s (NIPSSR 2005). Japan’s increase in age at marriage and proportion never married does not seem to be from “transformation of intimacy” but, rather, represents a “lack of intimacy.”

Indeed, in just the past few years there have been reports that the number of people cohabiting is increasing. A Cabinet Office survey carried out at the start of 2009 (Cabinet Office 2009) compared the ratio of those who had experience cohabiting in each age group from the three countries of Japan, Korea, and Singapore. Those results are shown in Table 2 with the results from a 2005 survey (Cabinet Office 2005) covering the same topic in the U.S., France, and Sweden for comparison (Kojima 2010a, Kojima 2010b). In contrast to Europe and North America, especially Sweden, where cohabitation is the majority, it remains a minority in East Asia, but is spreading, starting from Japan, then Singapore, then Korea. As there are large differences in the ratios of between men and women who have experienced cohabitation in Korea, it has been

suggested that female respondents are concealing their experience (Kojima 2010a).

Despite this, however, births out of wedlock are still extremely rare in East Asia. The ratio of births out of wedlock in 2005 was 2.0% in Japan, 1.5% in Korea, 4.0% in Taiwan, and 1.3% in Singapore (Suzuki 2010). In Europe, births out of wedlock count for more than half of all births in Northwestern Europe, and it rapidly increased even in Southern Europe (20.7% for Italy, 28.4% for Spain and 31.6% for Portugal), a great contrast with East Asia (Suzuki 2010). Instead, what we find is an increasing number of so-called “shotgun marriages,” or to be more faithful to the Japanese expression, “oops marriages”⁴. In Japan, the number of marriages due to pregnancy increased from the second half of the 1990s, and the proportion of cases in which the birth of the first child was less than nine months after the wedding was 10.6% in 1980, but had increased to 20.9% in 1999, 25.6% in 2005 and 25.3% in 2009 (MHLW 2010). The gap between the frequency of premarital sex and the contrasting conservative standards has presumably been responsible for this increase in “oops marriages”.

Cohabiting is possible, but must be concealed; pregnancy before marriage is possible, but birth out of wedlock must be avoided: there is still a very strong wall between marriage and other intimate relationships in East Asia. Unlike Europe, where cohabitation is replacing marriage and the institution of marriage has weakened, in East Asia the institution of marriage, while shaky, is nevertheless solid. We can see a sign of compressed modernity here.

2.3 International Marriages and High Sex Ratio at Birth

When we talk about recent demographic changes in East Asia, we cannot ignore international and cross-border marriages.⁵ Kojima Hiroshi includes these phenomena in the elements that make up the “East-Asian style second demographic transition” (Kojima 2010b). The increase in international marriages is once again led by Japan ahead of the other East Asian societies, starting back in the 1980s. In order to solve the problem of lack of eligible women for rural men to marry, a number of local authorities started government-led match-making projects, encouraging marriage with women from Asian countries including the Philippines, Sri Lanka, etc. In other words, rather than natural love-based marriages, this growth in international marriage was driven by an extension of introduced marriages, the traditional marriage method. In short order, marriage brokers jumped on the international marriage promotion band-

⁴ This type of marriage is called “dekichatta kon” in Japanese, which can be translated loosely as “Oops, we’ve done it! marriage”. It is important to note that these are not “forced marriages” in the sense of “shotgun marriages”.

⁵ Regarding marriage migration in East Asian, see Palriwala and Uberoi (2008).

wagon. In the 2000s, international marriage moved to showing increase in urban areas and industrial regions (Liew, Ochiai and Ishikawa 2010).⁶

Korea and Taiwan starting showing increased numbers of international marriages from the 1990s, a little later than Japan, but they rapidly increased in number, soon rising to far overtake Japan. The proportions of international or cross-border marriages⁷ are 5.1% in Japan (2008), 11.0% in Korea (2008) and 12.2% in Taiwan (2008) (NIPSSR 2010, Yamaji 2010, Ito 2010). While they declined later, in 2003 almost one marriage in three in Taiwan was a cross-border marriage.⁸

In Korea and Taiwan too the factor behind this was the lack of eligible women in rural areas and for lower-income men, but another factor, one not found in Japan, was the high sex ratio at birth. A high sex ratio has been prevalent in East Asia (in the narrow sense of the term) and South Asia for the past 30 years, since the start of the first fertility decline, with the exception of Japan which does not have patrilineal kinship groups and strong son preference. Kojima considers a high sex ratio to be another formative factor in the East Asian-style second demographic transition (Kojima 2010b). The sex ratio at birth in 1990 was 117 in Korea and 110 in Taiwan (Suzuki 2010). Ironically, the late start of the fertility decline enabled the people of these societies to use the new technologies of checking sex and sex-selective abortions. This is a typical example of compressed modernity.

As the reason they chose international marriages, the husbands of foreign wives usually mention the need to have a son to inherit the family name, the need for people to care for elderly parents, and to ensure a labor supply for the farms (Ochiai 2007). It means that the increase in international marriage and cross-border marriage in East Asia occurs to maintain the traditional family. This too can be seen as a sign of compressed modernity.

2.4 East Asian Marriage and Risk-Aversive Individualization

Divorce, the age at marriage, and the proportion of celibacy are all rising but the institution of marriage is intact. International and cross-border marriages flourish but for very traditional purposes. When we examine these related issues this way, it appears that “marriage” in East Asia may in fact have a different meaning to that in Europe.

We can see a striking character of the East Asian marriage in the relationship between sex and marriage. According to a MHLW research group which carried out surveys every two years of the attitudes and behaviors related to sex

⁶ With the rise in the resident foreigner population, it appears to be increasing without depending on the government or businesses (Liew, Ochiai and Ishikawa 2010).

⁷ The term “cross-border marriage” is used in Taiwan to include marriages with mainland Chinese.

⁸ 28.0% of brides in 2003 were non-Taiwanese.

of men and women aged 16-49, in 2010 40.8% of married people had not have sex for the past month, a continual increase from the 31.9% recorded in 2004 (Mainichi Newspaper 2011). This phenomenon has been termed “sexless couples” by the media. Sexlessness is also becoming an issue in Singapore as well, and novels are also written about the theme (Fujii 2010). If sex is at the center of intimacy, we can see that marriage in East Asia is not for the sake of intimacy itself, but is maintained for other reasons.

Table 4 shows selected results from the 2006 EASS (East Asian Social Survey) conducted in Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan focusing on the issue of the family (Iwai and Yasuda 2009). The first five questions, such as “One must put familial well-being and interest before one’s own,” ask about the balance between individualism and familialism. In Korea, China, and Taiwan, 7 or 8 out of 10 respondents agreed with the above question, showing strong familialistic trends. Even in Japan, the lowest, more than half agreed. Agreement with the idea that “Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage” was not low in the three societies other than Japan, but in Korea and China, agreement with “People who want to divorce must wait until their children are grown up” was enough high to prevent people following individualistic decisions. Inter-generational duties are not just from the parents to the children, but also “Children must make efforts to do something that would bring honor to their parents.” Marriage in East Asia is more about duty and responsibility than individual desire.

There were many disagreements with the statements, “It is not necessary to have children in marriage” and “It is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married”. The total of “Strongly disagree,” “Fairly disagree,” and “Somewhat disagree” was highest for both in Korea, with 77% and 66%. Korea was also top in agreeing with “People who want to divorce must wait until their children are grown up”. The huge gap between these strong normative ideas and the reality of ultra-low fertility and high divorce rates shows the depth of the inconsistency within Korean society.

Chang Kyung-Sup has explained this inconsistency under the concept of “risk-averse individualization”. He notes that “South Koreans ... have led highly family-centered social and personal lives under what may be called *familist compressed modernity*” (Chang 2010a, 24, Chang 2010b). This is as the family is the only social resource that can support individuals exposed to capitalist industrialization, urbanization, proletarianization, extreme tendencies in educational pursuit, and privatized welfare protection in rapid modernization. However, “the institutional weakening of families induced family relations to turn from social resources into risks”. You might be obliged to help your family members and relatives who have become fallen behind in this

competitive world, rather than receiving support from them.⁹ So, “Risk-averse individualization is defined as a social tendency of individuals trying to minimize the family-associated risks of modern life by extending or returning to individualized states of life” (Chang 2010a, 25). This is what actually happened after the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis in ultra-low fertility societies. People decided to postpone marriage or children or divorce to avoid the risk these might create for them. Kojima’s analysis of causes for cohabitation in Japan, Korea, and Singapore is suggestive (Kojima 2010a). He demonstrates that a common factor to all three societies is a lower educational background. The poor economy in Japan from 1992 to 2001 led to an increase in the number of people entering the workforce after high school who were cohabiting. In Korea, there was a large number of men with moderate education assumed to have been affected by the IMF Crisis (what the Asian Financial Crisis is known as in Korea) and in cohabitation relationships. In other words, cohabitation, which has started increasing in East Asia, is promoted by the “social exclusion” of people with lower education and unstable employment, rather than by individualistic choices to free themselves from the institution of marriage.¹⁰

Chang’s key point is that these tendencies are “not necessarily symptoms of individualization, because they seem to reflect the ever intensifying significance of family relations and values in South Korean life” (Chang 2010a, 24). Chang also notes that these trends are not restricted to Korea, but are shared by Japan and Taiwan, summing the situation up as: “The apparent convergence of capitalist East Asia in individualization without individualism is a historical outcome of the condensed modernization and second modernization of the latecomers” (Chang 2010a, 35).

3. Varieties of Familialism and their Failure

3.1 Causes of Familialism

Demographic and family changes currently underway in East Asia have similar phenomena-based aspects to the second demographic transition of Europe and North America, but in Europe while the institution of marriage is shaky and individualism has arisen, in East Asia in contrast the institution of marriage and familialism remain, showing superficially the same phenomenon. The extreme decline in fertility and the increase in divorces and in age at first marriage can be interpreted as desires to avoid the burden of a family, or to flee from them,

⁹ The Japanese sociologist Yamada Masahiro also presented the idea of seeing the family as a source of risk (Yamada 2001).

¹⁰ However, Kojima also found a new tendency for highly-educated women in Japan to cohabit after 2000, which might be interpreted as the birth of a new lifestyle (Kojima 2010a).

since the importance of the institution of family in terms of duty and responsibility remains unchanged.

So what causes familism to be prevalent in East Asia? The first thing that comes to mind is a cultural explanation rooted in the region's traditional culture, but, as noted above, there is no single shared culture common to all of the East Asian region. For example, the region from Southeast Asia to Japan has traditionally had high divorce rates and remarriage rates because there were no stigma attached (Reid 1993). Also, it was not uncommon to have children out of wedlock, and there was little discrimination towards illegitimate children (Ochiai and Nakajima 2010, Ochiai 2011). In this region, divorce and illegitimacy rates declined as part of the modernization process (Ochiai 2010, 8-9). On the other hand, the Northeastern area from North China to Korea, with its strong Confucian heritage, generally frowns on divorce and remarriage, not to mention children out-of-wedlock. Sechiyama contrasted the northern part and the southern part of East Asia in terms of gender relation: patriarchy with gender segregation of social space in the northern area and more gender equality with women's high contribution to rice production in the southern area. A simple cultural explanation cannot be applied (Sechiyama 1996).¹¹

According to Esping-Andersen, "familism" is the idea that the family should have the greatest welfare responsibility towards its members, both in income distribution and care provision. He holds that, in its early stages, the modern welfare state was premised on familism in virtually all nations. It was only from the 1970s onwards that the Scandinavian countries came to prioritize defamilization. He insists that the consequence of familistic social policy is two sub-optimal scenarios: low fertility or a high proportion of families in poverty (Esping-Andersen 2009, 81). As Esping-Andersen notes, Europe has progressed in three or four different directions through its policy choices from the 1970s. We should pay more attention to the policy decisions East Asian governments have made and are making under the conditions of compressed modernity. With the combined effects of compressed modernity and the policy decisions in it, East Asia has developed a stronger familism than Europe at the same time as creating varieties of familism (Ochiai 2010b).

3.2 Familist Reform in Japan

For Japan, we should understand the importance of the policy reform made in the 1980s. Prior to that, until the High Growth period of the 1960s, the Japa-

¹¹ However, there still is a room for the explanation based on the history of the area, if we relate the development of social welfare in Europe to Christianity. The lack of the process that the Christian church replaced the role of the family in taking care of their frail or disadvantaged members just as Jack Goody describes (Goody 1983) might be the reason of remaining and even strengthened familism in Asia in history.

nese government was still following developmentalist policies. The policy focus was on economic growth under the strong leadership of MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry), and was, in a way, a continuation of the prewar system. In the realm of social policy, Japan started to develop social welfare, imitating Bismarkian social insurance schemes as early as in the first half of the twentieth century. After the Second World War, the Livelihood Protection Act was introduced and the universal pension system was established for all save for non-working housewives. We may grant that Japan was ahead, in the Asian context, in the construction of social security system. However, the role of social security still remained peripheral in the 1960s, because growth was considered to be the best way to improve people's well-being. We can call this system a sort of "workfare," where high rates of employment are assumed to perform the same function as welfare. It was only when substantial economic growth had been achieved in the late 1960s and early '70s that the government recognized the need to revise the existing welfare system to construct a more appropriate welfare state. The year 1973 was named "Welfare Year 1," which referred to it as the starting point for transforming Japan into a welfare state in the fuller sense.

However, ironically, "Welfare Year 1" was hit by the Energy Crisis. The government became wary and set a new agenda called the "Japanese-style welfare society" that emphasized "traditional" Japanese virtues of "self-help and mutual support within the family and the community". What the government tried to promote was not actually a welfare "state" but a welfare "society". People might find an early example of welfare retrenchment and welfare pluralism in this idea but the important difference was the level prior to the change. Japan did not have much developed to retrench to. Rather, the size of social expenditure was increased in the 1970s and later. Under the conditions of compressed modernity, this development and retrenchment of welfare happened at the same time.

There were also economic and demographic conditions that made it possible. Growth rates remained high even after the Energy Crisis, which affected Europe and North America even more seriously. Compared to Europe and North America, affluence lasted 20 years longer in Japan. Also, with an already low number of children and a still low number of elderly people, Japan was still enjoying a "demographic dividend" in the 1970s. In this period, the proportion of working-age population in Japan was 69% (1970), higher than that in Europe (for example, 64% in Germany, 65% in Sweden) and other Asian countries (56% in Korea, 58% in Singapore) (see Figure 12 in Ochiai 2010a). Under these favorable conditions, growth rates even reached around 5 per cent per annum from the late 1980s to the early 1990s (IMF 2004), a period known as the "asset bubble". A book entitled *Japan As Number One* by Ezra Vogel (Vogel 1979) became a best-seller in 1979, opening the way to the boom of

books about Japanese management and culture. The Japanese society was able to continue “workfare” for two more decades.

In 1980s, the government made the “family” a policy issue to create the foundations of a “Japanese-style welfare society”. Flattered by the cultural explanations of Japan’s economic success, the government and their ideologues tried to create a unique policy direction, not imitating any policies in the West. They were also irritated by the changes in the family already becoming visible in the statistics, such as increasing divorce rates and age at marriage, and decreasing fertility. The Ohira Cabinet’s policy agenda on “Enrichment of Family Foundations” (1979) as well the so-called “Whitepaper on the Family” (a special issue of the “Whitepaper on National Life”) were produced from this fear of a “family crisis” and a strong desire to protect the Japanese family, the core of national identity, from contamination by western culture. In other words, these policies were a reaction to the second demographic transition that started from Europe and North America. Laws known as the “protection of the housewife’s throne” were implemented in 1980s, including an increase in the legal inheritance amount for the wife (1980), pension reform that waived premiums for the wives of employees of large companies (1985), and the creation of a special tax deduction for those with dependent spouses (1986).

The effect of this anachronistic familialist reform was enormous. Increase in the full-time employment of women since 1950’s ceased by the Energy Crisis and the only expansion in women’s employment from the latter half of 1970s to present was in part-time employment (Tanaka 1999, Ochiai 2010a, Figure 10). This was because the wives of large company employees restricted their working hours to adjust their income within the amount to be recognized as “dependent” on their husband. This new gender division of labor – what Jane Lewis calls a “one-and-a-half earner model” (Lewis 2001) – was created in the recession, fixed by the law and remained entrenched for decades. In 1970, in contrast to expectations, the rate of female labor force participation was higher in Japan than in most European countries (Ochiai 2010a, 12). However, in the three decades that followed, Europe and North America each saw big jumps, while little change has been observed in Japan (Figure 6). Women’s participation rates by age still show an M-shape pattern in Japan. The gender role change occurred in most European and North American countries at the same time as the second demographic transition did not occur in Japan because of the familialist reforms of the 1980s.

In 1990s Japan lost the economic and demographic conditions it had in 1980s. When the bubble economy finally burst in 1991-92, the Japanese economy entered a long period of stagnation. Since then, Japan’s growth has been modest, with some fluctuations. The favorable demographic state did not last either. The proportion of elderly population skyrocketed in 1990s, reaching 22.1% in 2008 (NIPSSR 2010), the highest rate in the world (Figure 7). In spite of these drastic changes in economic and demographic conditions, the familial-

istic structure consolidated in the 1980s resisted change, resulting in the “lost decades”. The government introduced new policy measures from the late 1990s, allegedly aiming for the socialization of care, but those policies were still heavily reliant on familialistic ideas. For example, the LTCI (Long-term Care Insurance), which was introduced in 2000, is designed to promote home-based care, not institutional care. Family caregivers can hire “home helpers” for a number of hours a day with subsidies from this insurance, but they still suffer from responsibility for care for the rest of the day and from the economic burden of having to partially pay for this care (co-payment) (Ochiai et al. 2011).

3.3 Liberal Familialism in Other East Asian Societies

Other East Asian societies had very different experiences than Japan. Modernity was even more compressed in these other societies, forcing them to undertake the paradoxical task of constructing a welfare state and at the same time, retrenching welfare (Miyamoto, Peng, and Uzuhashi 2003, 301). For example, Korean President Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2003) was faced with this despite the forced application of neo-liberalism and globalization after the IMF Crisis created a concept of “productive welfare” that would construct social welfare as a social investment, or in other words, the foundation of economic growth.

Based on field research in six East Asian societies, our research team has proposed a framework for comparing the patterns of childcare and elderly care provision (Ochiai and Molony 2008, Ochiai 2009). One significant finding was the key role the market sector played in certain societies, especially for childcare and elderly care in Singapore and for elderly care in Taiwan. This reflects the employment of foreign domestic workers and care workers in the home. The huge diversity within the Asian region means that we are seeing more and more transnational migration of domestic and care workers. Those families who hire care services from the market usually profess the familialistic idea that a family should take care of its elderly parents at home. Yet the reality is that it is migrant care workers who perform these care tasks. To put it another way, these families outsource their filial piety.¹² We may call this approach “liberal familialism”.

There are foreign domestic and care workers in Europe and North America as well. However, when we compare the proportions of foreign domestic and care workers in terms of the total foreign labor force, the figures are: Hong Kong 57.5%, Taiwan 26.6%, Singapore 17.8%, Spain 16.4%, Italy 10.4%,

¹² According to Asato, foreign workers are “often referred to as an ‘intimate other’ to internalize surrogate quasi-family member in order to maintain family function.” For the people who cannot afford hiring foreign domestic worker, an option is cross-border marriage. “Foreign household workers and marriage migrants are similar in that they both provide welfare within the family” (Asato 2010, 98).

France 7.2%, U.S.A. 2.0%, Germany 0.6% and UK 0.5% (Asato 2010). These figures demonstrate the extent to which East Asian societies depend on the domestic and care labor of foreign women. The only comparable cases in Europe are Spain and Italy, which are Southern European societies known to be familialistic. The employment of foreign domestic and care workers is complementary to familialism. Asato Wako rather calls it “familialization policy” to “maintain family as a unit of welfare provision by incorporating foreign domestic workers.” He sees the intention of the government for “externalization of welfare provision onto family,” “considering international economic competitiveness” (Asato 2010, 88).

Compared with societies like Singapore or Taiwan, the complete lack of a solution that involves hiring foreign workers in Japan is striking. Japan’s immigration policy does not provide visas for unskilled foreign workers, so there are almost no foreign domestic or care workers in the country (Liew, Ochiai and Ishikawa 2010)¹³. Just as in the case of consolidation of the family, Japan sticks to its 1960s system and resists changes in numerous aspects in spite of the thorough transformation of the society. In its “semi-compressed modernity” Japan barely managed to build a structure resembling the first modernity. However, there was not enough time for it to mature and be reconstructed according to changing circumstances. In contrast, other East Asian societies had even less time in their much more “compressed modernity” to achieve stability, which functions as a positive factor to promote constant change. For example, the hiring of domestic workers was a normal habit in an earlier stage of modernity. Before losing their collective memory of hiring domestic help, other East Asian societies started accepting domestic workers with foreign nationalities, while the carefully-constructed privacy works as an obstacle in Japan’s case.

Asian familialism is diverse in reality. However, even in the case of liberal familialism where the family receives care services from the market, the responsibility to finance the cost of care is usually borne by the family.¹⁴ This is why liberal familialism is still called familialism, and why fertility in these societies is also low. The economic burden is particularly heavy for people of economically disadvantaged statuses. The impact of the economic crisis in and after 1997-8 was severe, because in liberal familialism societies, it is people with lower economic status who are more vulnerable to economic stress.

¹³ Japan has recently begun accepting care workers as candidates to become nurses based on agreements with Indonesia and the Philippines, but their numbers are still few and the program has a lot of problems (Asato 2009).

¹⁴ The regulated market created by Japan’s LTCI has the same structure (Ochiai et al. 2011).

4. Conclusion

The answer to the first question whether East Asia is going through a second demographic transition is both yes and no, because, at first glance, the demographic changes currently underway in East Asia have similarities to those in Europe and North America, but there are considerable differences in essence. Fertility in Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong has declined to a new global low level, which can be called “ultra-low fertility”. Divorce, the age at marriage, and the proportion never married are increasing but the rise in cohabitation is slow and births out of wedlock are avoided. Increasing international marriages and the high sex ratio at birth are special elements of the East-Asian style second demographic transition. Marriage as an institution of duty and responsibility rather than intimacy is still intact in East Asia. Because of that, when family relationships changed from being social resources to being risks during the economic crisis, risk-averse individualization occurred to avoid the burden of a family. The answer to the second question, therefore, is that it was not individualism but familism that is causing the current demographic and family changes in East Asia.

The cause of the prevalence of familism in East Asia is not primarily cultural factors, but compressed modernity. In the semi-compressed modernity in Japan, the anachronistic familist reform of the 1980s consolidated the family and gender structure of the 1960s, which then resisted the economic and demographic changes in the 1990s, resulting in the “lost decades” since then. In contrast, in other East Asian societies that experienced a much stronger compression of modernity took a course of liberal familism that makes use of the global market in the name of the family. Thus, different degrees of compression created the varieties of familism we see in East Asia.

We may say that both types of familism have failed in constructing a sustainable social system. The genuine familism in Japan suppressed the flexibility and adaptability of the family in the changing world, while the liberal familism in other East Asian societies resulted in the harsh exclusion of economically disadvantaged people. In the near future, when other societies are as aged as Japan is today, the social reproduction of East Asia will become an even harder challenge without radical and dynamic policy changes.

Appendix

Table 1: Total Fertility Rates in East Asia and Other Selected Societies

Area	TFR	Year
Hong Kong	0.98	(2007)
Taiwan	1.12	(2006)
S. Korea	1.13	(2007)
Singapore	1.25	(2007)
Japan	1.32	(2007)
China	1.7	(2007)
Thailand	1.9	(2007)
N. Korea	2.0	(2007)
Myanmar	2.2	(2007)
Vietnam	2.2	(2007)
Indonesia	2.3	(2007)
Mongol	2.3	(2007)
Brunei	2.4	(2007)
Malaysia	2.8	(2007)
The Philippines	3.0	(2007)
Cambodia	3.9	(2007)
Laos	4.6	(2007)

Source: Cabinet Office (2007).

Table 2: Proportions Ever Experienced Cohabitation

	Japan 2009		Korea 2009		Singapore 2009	
Age	male	female	male	female	male	female
20-29	19.4%	19.5%	10.1%	2.0%	12.7%	9.3%
30-39	33.0%	25.8%	11.1%	1.8%	12.6%	9.2%
40-49	20.8%	12.5%	3.4%	0.6%	8.9%	7.0%
	USA 2005		France 2005		Sweden 2005	
Age	male	female	male	female	male	female
20-29	48.1%	51.2%	39.1%	53.0%	54.8%	69.0%
30-39	62.0%	61.7%	61.0%	66.1%	80.8%	87.2%
40-49	66.1%	60.5%	51.4%	45.9%	80.8%	77.5%

Source: Kojima (2010) Table 2 based on Cabinet Office (2009) and (2005).

Table 3: Crude Marriage Rate, Crude Divorce Rate, The Ratio of Divorce and Marriage in Selected Societies

Area	Year	CMR	CDR	div/mar
Uruguay	(2007)	3.84	4.33	1.13
Belgium	(2007)	4.29	2.83	0.66
Spain	(2007)	4.49	2.80	0.62
Hungary	(2007)	4.06	2.50	0.62
Cuba	(2007)	5.05	3.08	0.61
Austria	(2007)	4.33	2.47	0.57
Czech	(2007)	5.53	3.01	0.54
Russia	(2007)	8.90	4.83	0.54
France	(2007)	4.33	2.22	0.51
Germany	(2007)	4.48	2.27	0.51
Switzerland	(2007)	5.34	2.63	0.49
USA	(2005)	7.50	3.60	0.48
UK	(2007)	5.14	2.37	0.46
Taiwan	(2007)	5.80	2.60	0.45
The Netherlands	(2007)	4.42	1.95	0.44
Sweden	(2007)	5.24	2.26	0.43
Hong Kong	(2007)	-	-	*0.39
S.Korea	(2007)	7.10	2.57	0.36
Japan	(2007)	5.70	2.02	0.35
Macao	(2007)	3.90	1.30	0.33
Singapore	(2007)	5.22	1.48	0.28
Poland	(2007)	6.50	1.75	0.27
China	(2007)	7.50	1.58	0.21
Italy	(2007)	4.21	0.84	0.20
Iran	(2007)	11.80	1.40	0.12
Mongol	(2007)	15.70	0.67	0.04
Vietnam	(2007)	5.70	0.20	0.04
East Asian societies				

*Calculated from numbers of marriage and divorce.

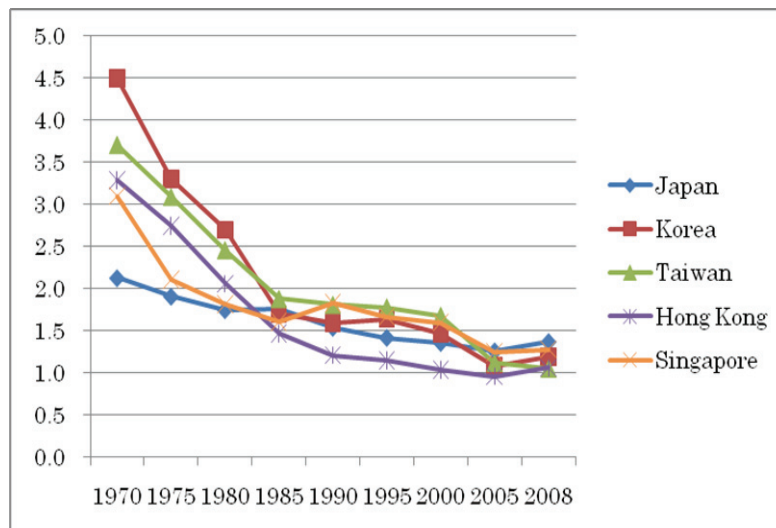
Source: Hong Kong, Macao, Vietnam; United Nations Statistics Division (2008), Taiwan: Ito (2010), Other: NIPSSR (2010).

Table 4: Family Values in Asian Societies
The total proportions of people who answered “Strongly agree,” “Fairly agree”
and “Somewhat agree”

	Japan	Korea	China	Taiwan
One must put familial well-being and interest before one's own.	50	79	68	83
Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage.	29	38	49	46
People who want to divorce must wait until children are grown up.	36	55	43	33
To what extent do you think your own parent(s) influenced your decision of the current marriage partner?	30	47	41	36
Children must make efforts to do something that would bring honor to their parents.	40	74	89	86
It is not necessary to have children in marriage.	20	11	28	35
It is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married.	28	22	25	36

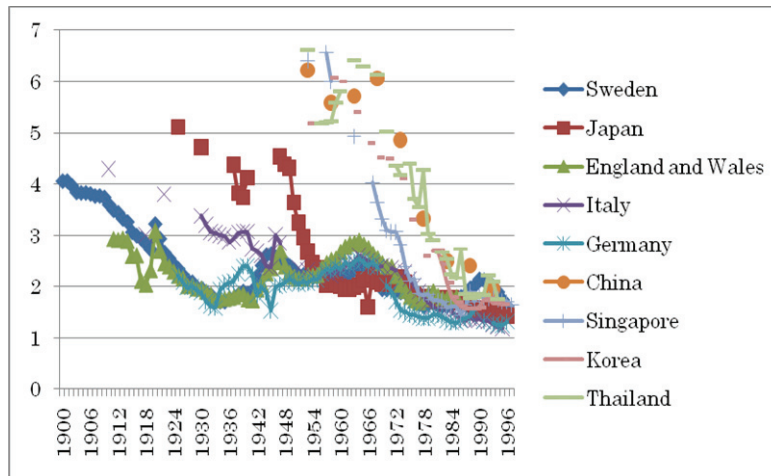
Source: Iwai and Yasuda (2009) based on EASS 2006.

Figure 1: Trends in TFR in Five East Asian Societies



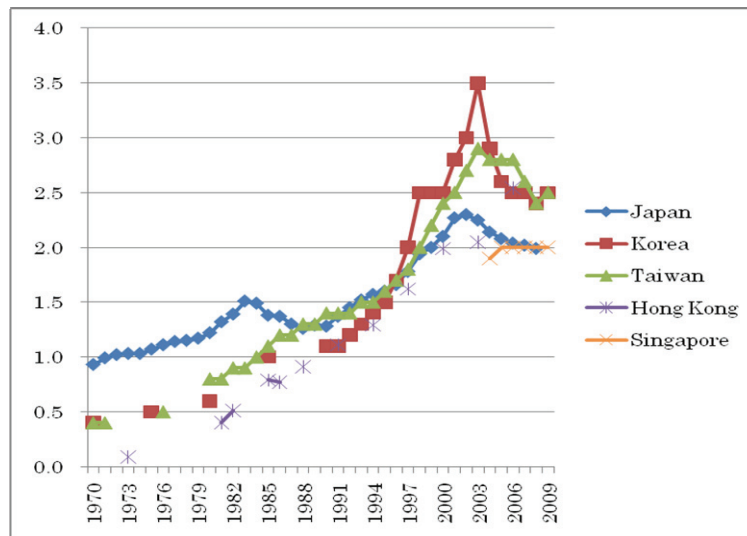
Source: Cabinet Office (2010).

Figure 2: Long-term Trends in TFR in Europe and Asia



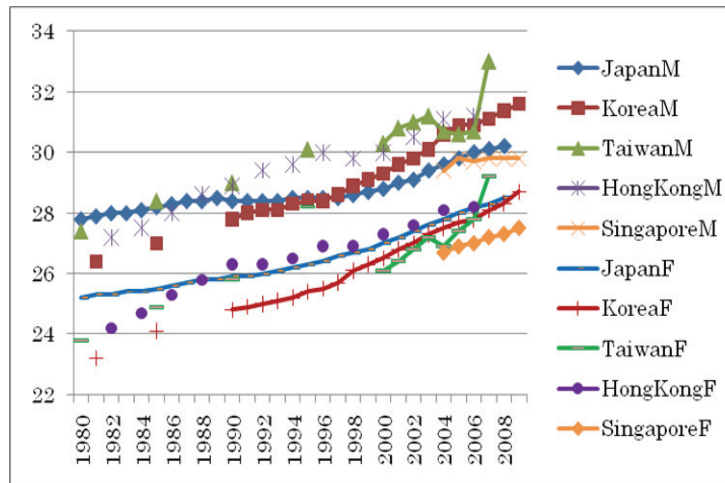
Source: UN, Demographic Yearbook.

Figure 3: Trends in Crude Divorce Rates in Five East Asian Societies



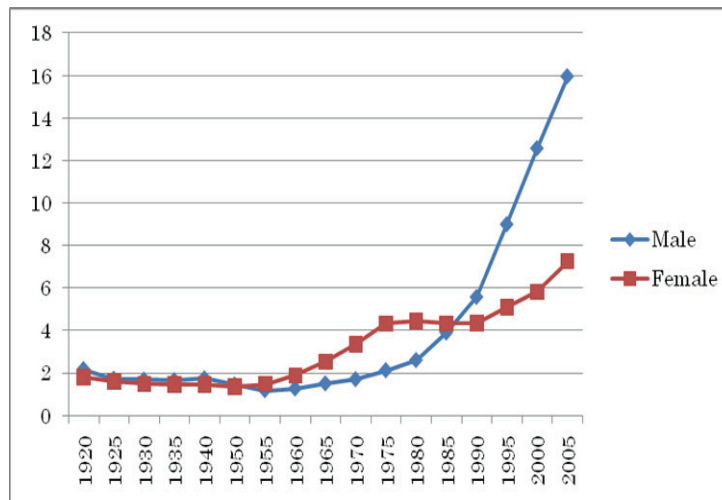
Source: Japan: NIPSSR (2010), Korea: Chang (2010a) and Statistics Korea (2008), Taiwan: Ito (2010), Hong Kong: Census & Statistics Department (2002) (2007a) (2007c), Singapore: Singapore Government, Department of Statistics (2009).

Figure 4: Trends in Age at First Marriage in Five East Asian Societies



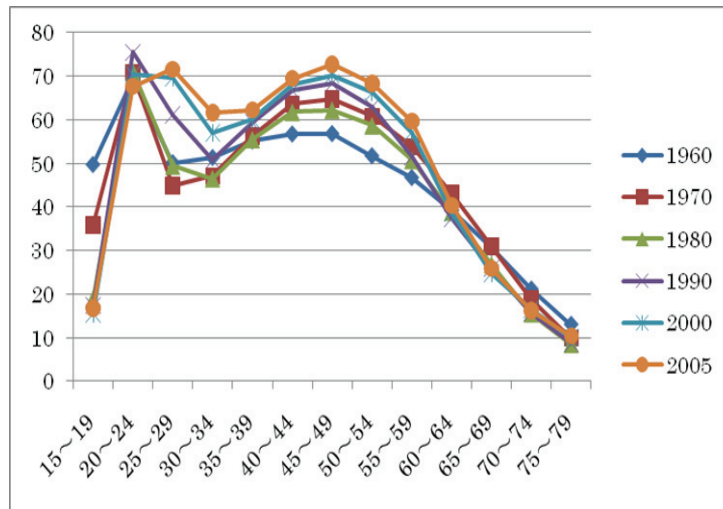
Source: Japan: NIPSSR (2010), Korea: Chang (2010a), Taiwan: Suzuki (2010), Sun (2009), Taiwan Ministry of Interior (2010), Hong Kong: Census & Statistics Department (2001) (2007a) (2007b), Singapore: Singapore Government, Department of Statistics (2009).

Figure 5: Trends in Proportion Never Married in Japan



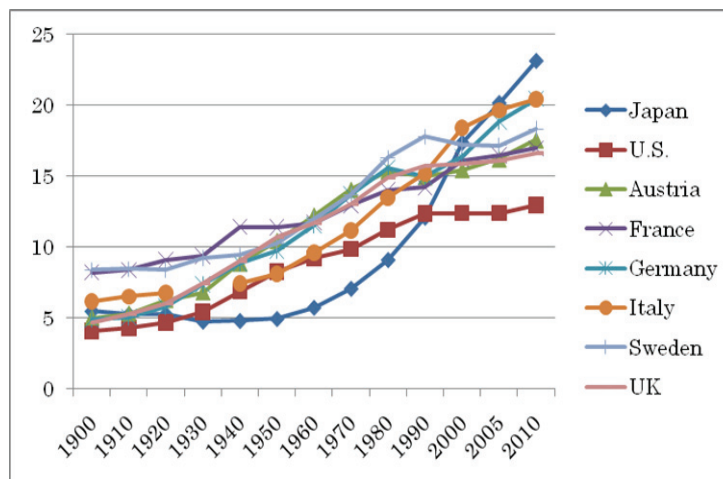
Source: NIPSSR (2010).

Figure 6: Changes in Women's Labour Force Participation by Age in Japan



Source: NIPSSR (2010).

Figure 7: Trends in Proportion over 65 in Selected Countries



Source: NIPSSR (2010).

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